

## Report to Civic Works Committee

**To:** Chair and Members Civic Works Committee

**From:** Kelly Scherr, P.Eng., MBA, FEC  
Managing Director, Environmental & Engineering Services  
and City Engineer

**Subject:** London Community Recovery Network – Ideas for Action by  
Municipal Council

**Date:** February 9, 2021

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Environmental and Engineering Services & City Engineer the following actions be taken with respect to the London Community Recovery Network:

- a) The implementation plans for the following idea for action submitted from the London Community Recovery Network and received by Municipal Council **BE APPROVED:**  
Focus on actions that get people moving around the core (Idea #2.1)
- b) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to execute the implementation plan for this idea for action in support of London's community recovery from COVID-19;
- c) That \$330,000 **BE APPROVED** as set out in the business case included in Appendix A, noting that Municipal Council previously authorized \$5 million to be contributed to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures;
- d) This report **BE RECEIVED**.

## Executive Summary

### 1.0 Executive Summary

Over the past few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically altered how Londoners work, learn and participate in the community. COVID-19 has challenged the community in an unprecedented way, with long-lasting economic and social impacts likely to continue. In response, London City Council quickly established the London Community Recovery Network in partnership with leaders from London's business, industry, non-profit, academia sectors as well as communities that have experienced disproportionate impacts from COVID-19.

Network members acknowledge that collective efforts toward London's community recovery will require a long term commitment by the community. However, in the first phase of its work, Network members identified 70 ideas for action that included 37 immediate recovery ideas for the City of London to lead in the short term. Twelve (12) of these short term ideas are already underway by Civic Administration. The remaining 25 ideas have been received by Municipal Council with Civic Administration being directed to determine implementation plans for consideration by the appropriate standing committee.

On January 12, 2021, Council resolved that:

"b) The recommended short term ideas for action to support London's COVID-19 community recovery, as submitted by the London Community Recovery Network (the Network) **BE RECEIVED**;

c) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to determine implementation plans for ideas in Table 2, excluding those included in Table 1, and return to the appropriate standing committee for approval in early 2021, noting that with the report to SPPC on September 20, 2020 (2020 Mid-Year Operating Budget Monitoring Report & COVID-19 Financial Impacts) Council authorized \$5 million to be contributed to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures”

For transparency and ease of reporting, Civic Administration has developed a single report that includes ideas for action for each of the appropriate Standing Committees. This report to the Civic Works Committee includes the following Network idea for action for discussion and direction from the 25 ideas received for implementation by the City of London:

Idea Ref. #	Idea for Action
2.1	Focus on actions that get people moving around the core

Standing committees of Council will consider reports regarding ideas for action that overlap with the mandates of each particular committee. For a full list of the 25 ideas moving forward for the consideration of Municipal Council, please refer to the [December 16, 2020 SPPC report](#).

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The community-driven work of the London Community Recovery Network touches on numerous key areas of focus under the City of London Strategic Plan:

Strengthening our Community:

- Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful
- Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city

Building a Sustainable City

- London has a strong and healthy environment
- Londoners can move around the city safely and easily in a manner that meets their needs

Growing our Economy:

- London will develop a top quality workforce
- London is a leader in Ontario for attracting new jobs and investments
- London creates a supportive environment where entrepreneurs, businesses and talent can thrive

Creating a Safe City for Women and Girls

- London has enhanced the potential for women and girls to live safe lives

Leading in Public Service

- The City of London is trusted, open, and accountable in service of our community
- Londoners experience exceptional and valued customer service

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- London Community Recovery Network – Immediate Ideas for Action to Support London’s COVID-19 Community Recovery – December 16, 2020, SPPC
- 2020 Mid-Year Operating Budget Monitoring Report & COVID-19 Financial Impacts - September 20, 2020 - SPPC
- First Report of the London Community Recovery Network – July 14, 2020, SPPC

- Covid-19 Financial Impacts – Update – June 23, 2020, SPPC
- Second Report from the Mayor’s Economic and Social Impact and Recovery Task Forces – May 8, 2020
- Covid-19 Financial Impacts and Additional Measures for Community Relief – April 28, 2020, SPPC
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response and Funding Overview, Community and Protective Services Committee, April 28, 2020, Consent Item # 2.3
- Property Tax Deferral Options – April 14, 2020, CSC
- First Report from the Mayor’s Economic and Social Impact and Recovery Task Forces – April 9, 2020

## 2.0 Discussion and Considerations

### Idea for Action #2.1 – Focus on actions that get people moving around the core

#### *Idea for Action:*

The London Community Recovery Network has recommended that the City of London “identify actions to promote a walkable, accessible downtown; address physical barriers, use technologies available to support accessibility needs. Improve signage to help drivers, pedestrians and cyclists navigate; map the journey from the car to ultimate destinations. Uncertainty on timelines acknowledged broader plans to increase walkability/accessibility will take considerable time.”

With respect to actions underway, construction of 2020-2021 core area projects has had a deliberate focus on accessibility and supporting the active transportation realm. For example, Richmond Street reconstruction between Dundas and York Streets has created wider sidewalks and the upcoming Downtown Loop will support better transit service. Core area cycling infrastructure projects on Dundas Street, Colborne Street, and connections at Riverside Drive with the Thames Valley Parkway network also incorporate significant streetscaping amenities to help implement this initiative. Core construction mitigation and temporary detouring/signage have been introduced to help drivers, pedestrians and cyclists navigate more safely through the temporary conditions as a result of construction. Civic Administration has also been working with community partners to install bike locker units in three high-use locations in or close to downtown as part of a pilot project by Spring 2021. Talks have begun with the Accessibility Specialist to review the use of technology options that may be available to support broader accessibility in the core, such as trial installation of Blind Square on Dundas Place and/or the "Shop Talk" program run by CNIB, for those who are blind or partially sighted. The talks were suspended at the start of the pandemic and are expected to resume after it is safe to do so. Finally, the condition of sidewalks in the downtown area to improve accessibility and walkability will continue to be addressed on an annual basis and an application has been made to senior levels of government for additional funding to allow a larger scope of these improvements in 2021.

The LCRN idea specifically identifies improving signage to help drivers, pedestrians and cyclists navigate through downtown and map their journey from the car and other modes of transport to their ultimate destinations. This is best achieved by producing a Downtown Wayfinding Plan (the Plan) and implementing its recommendations. Significant public infrastructure and private development construction has continued during the pandemic, even as the current occupancies of many downtown venues and establishments have fallen to historically low levels under Covid restrictions. Most public festivals have been cancelled. Re-orienting those returning to downtown in 2021 and after the pandemic will take on added significance. In addition, improved wayfinding in the focussed territory of the downtown, with its dense mix of uses and high trip generation, the infrastructure and operational techniques used here could also be adapted for future use in other parts of the city. The Downtown Loop, East London Link and Wellington Gateway transit improvements, for example, could be factored into the wayfinding plan.

It is recommended that delivery of a Downtown Wayfinding Plan be jointly led by the Development and Compliance Services and Environmental & Engineering Services, in cooperation with stakeholders such as Downtown London, Tourism London, and others. The Plan would be produced in the first year, with signs and maps in place in the subsequent year, subject to a capital investment of \$290,000 via the \$5 million Economic Development Reserve Fund. A smaller ongoing operating budget for sign maintenance and replacements is also required. Further details are found in the LCRN Business Case attached as Appendix A.

Providing more and better infrastructure is one category of action “to get people moving around the core”. These physical investments complement the broader context of other LCRN Ideas for Action aimed at activations for repopulating and reviving the sociability of downtown streets led through other service areas. These include hosting interactive, distanced festivals and events, outdoor concerts, incentivizing sidewalk patios, etc.

### **3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations**

On September 20, 2020, the 2020 Mid-Year Operating Budget Monitoring Report & COVID-19 Financial Impacts report was presented to SPPC. Civic Administration reported that after applying the Safe Restart Agreement funding and prior to the recommendations in the report, the Property Tax Supported Budget projected surplus would be \$15.3 million. One recommendation was, notwithstanding the Council approved Surplus/Deficit Policy, that Civic Administration be authorized to allocate \$5 million of the surplus to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures.

As the implementation plans for short term ideas for action from the Network that require municipal implementation are developed, Civic Administration will track the estimated financial impacts. If the total amount exceeds the \$5 million allocation, options for addressing the shortfall will be presented. As the individual implementation plans return to the appropriate standing committee for approval, recommendations to access funding to support the plans will be included.

## **Conclusion**

This report was prepared as part of the City of London’s response to the ideas for action identified by the London Community Recovery Network focused on accelerating community recovery from COVID-19 in the short term. If directed, Civic Administration will begin the implementation of the plans listed herein to execute on these ideas for action.

The Network’s idea generation and prioritization process has drawn on the insight and expertise of a wide variety of individuals and has led to valuable discussions related to recovery within our community. The prioritized list of community recovery ideas would not have been possible without the efforts and contributions made by a large number of business and community partners, Members of the London City Council, and all Service Areas across the City of London. The City of London would also like to thank local Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament for providing valuable insights to members throughout the course of this phase of the work.

**Prepared and Submitted by:** **Jim Yanchula, MCIP RPP, Manager,  
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Relations, Roads & Transportation**

**Recommended by:** **Kelly Scherr, P. Eng., MBA, FEC Managing  
Director, Environmental and Engineering  
Services and City Engineer**

Appendix A: Business Case  
cc. Members of the London Community Recovery Network  
City of London Senior Leadership Team  
Community Recovery Working Group

## Appendix A

### London Community Recovery Network Ideas for Action – Business Case

Idea #: 2.1

Idea Title: Focus on actions that get people moving around the core

#### Business Case Deliverables & Impact

One specific action cited in Our Move Forward: London’s Downtown Plan, adopted in 2015 is: “Implement a downtown wayfinding program that makes it easy to get to downtown and effortless to navigate through it.” Though currently not an approved project, if advanced now as a priority, it would respond to the second part of LCRN Idea for Action 2.1 to “improve signage to help drivers, pedestrians and cyclists navigate; map the journey from the car to ultimate destinations to promote a walkable, accessible downtown”. Better wayfinding signage is achievable, mapped not just from downtown parking lots, but also from other significant sites such as: the Thames Valley Parkway and Core Area cycle network systems, VIA Rail, Greyhound, and RT stations to key destinations like Richmond Row, Dundas Place, and parks and event venues. Current mapped journeys are limited and not integrated. A wayfinding “you are here” map is a feature in each of the three Dundas Place Gateway Markers that are scheduled for installation in the first quarter of 2021. A more robust wayfinding signage program would leverage investments from all orders of government made in active transportation infrastructure while also providing better connectivity and sustainable transportation alternatives. The program will also support economic recovery in travel and tourism and as the community emerges from the pandemic.

The first step would be commissioning a Downtown Wayfinding Plan, specifically through downtown. Led by City Planning, the plan’s purpose is to access specific industry expertise and apply it in London, setting forth principles, pathways, standards, and siting for wayfinding signs and maps, and also outlining the operating requirements to successfully execute the ongoing wayfinding program. The plan could be delivered within a year.

Implementation of the Plan could follow plan adoption on a prioritized geographic/pathway basis, to suit available implementation resources. A quick start should entail removal of existing ad-hoc orientation signs and maps and initial installation of program signs. The latter would ideally start as a pilot to test out solutions in a focused territory or route, for the broader longer-term wayfinding plan, and also to get feedback from the public and businesses. For continuity, ideally an in-house team, possibly led by the new Active Transportation Program Manager, would be designated with the ongoing operational responsibility to produce, locate and maintain an inventory of wayfinding signs; track their condition and currency; and determine when wayfinding program principles or sign standards need to change.

Learnings could eventually also expand to a more comprehensive wayfinding program based on a broader plan that maps journeys in a comprehensive and integrated way, from important entry points in the city as a whole, to not only downtown, but to other defined districts and regional destinations.

#### Business Case Financial Impacts

Operating Budget Impacts (\$000's)	2021	2022	2023	2021- 2023 Total
Total Expenditure <sup>(1)</sup>	\$0	\$20	\$20	\$0
Existing Sources of Financing:	0	0	0	0
Net Request	\$0	\$20	\$20	\$40

(1) Operating funding required for sign maintenance and replacements.

Capital Budget Impacts (\$000's)	2021	2022	2023	2021-2023 Total
Total Expenditure	\$125	\$165	\$0	\$290
Existing Sources of Financing:	0	0	0	0

(2) Capital funding required to prepare wayfinding sign plan and graphic standards, and to purchase wayfinding signs and maps.

## Business Case Metrics

Metric Description	Current	2021	2022	2023
Number of # signs/maps installed and replaced		0	250/20	0

## What are the risks of not proceeding?

Proceeding with this idea now may increase the level of participation from important travel and tourism economy stakeholders who are less occupied with their mainline business concerns. Also, the Downtown Wayfinding Plan can be informed by, and integrate with, recent and ongoing infrastructure investment within improved and added active transportation and transit networks that merge and overlap downtown. Producing a coherent and quality wayfinding sign and map program as the downtown population and economy ramps back up in the next 12 to 24 months offers a timely opportunity for to be in place when visitors return to downtown venues and new residents occupy units currently under construction.

## Other Information

Our Move Forward: London's Downtown Plan

<https://london.ca/government/council-civic-administration/master-plans-strategies/plans-strategies>